

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 266

By Finney L

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Judge Whit LaFon of Jackson.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Judge Whit LaFon; and

WHEREAS, Judge LaFon was an exemplary public servant and consummate jurist who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, the Honorable Whit LaFon, a former Assistant District Attorney under David Murray, Sr., was appointed by Governor Ned McWherter to serve as Circuit Court Judge for the Twenty-sixth Judicial District, which includes Madison, Chester, and Henderson Counties; in the course of his eleven years on the bench, and in all his years of life, Judge LaFon earned the respect of members of the bench and bar alike for his integrity, his genuine decency, and the exemplary quality of his legal mind; and

WHEREAS, born in Palmersville on March 14, 1918, Whit LaFon was the son of Maude Gatlin and Walter L. LaFon, who ran a general store at the time of his son's birth; and

WHEREAS, as a boy, Whit LaFon moved with his family to Jackson, where his father began working for the Tennessee Highway Department; as Captain of the Jackson High School football team, Whit LaFon led his teammates to an undefeated season in 1936; and

WHEREAS, not long after Judge LaFon graduated from Jackson High, he served his country with bravery and the conviction of a true patriot as a member of the United States Army Air Corps; and

WHEREAS, following World War II, the GI Bill allowed him to continue his education, and Judge LaFon attended Vanderbilt University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts, as well as a law degree; and

WHEREAS, Judge LaFon began his law practice in the office of the late Jack Woodall, Sr.; he later joined the practice of the late Roger Murray, Sr., under whom Judge LaFon would serve as an Assistant District Attorney; and

WHEREAS, as an attorney in private practice, the Honorable Whit LaFon often chose to represent working men and women rather than big business, insurance concerns, or banks; as a lawyer, he was able to realize that earnest sense of justice and fairness for which he will be so fondly remembered; and

WHEREAS, upon the retirement of Circuit Court Judge Andrew T. "Tip" Taylor in 1987, Governor McWherter afforded Judge LaFon the opportunity to exercise his strong convictions and sense of public duty in an even larger arena; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement from the bench in 1998, the Honorable Whit LaFon bought a building on Deaderick Street and Highland Avenue in Jackson, practiced law part-time, and worked to help his nephew, Vice-president Al Gore, with his presidential campaign; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his law practice and public service, Judge LaFon maintained membership in a number of civic organizations; active in the American Legion from 1946 forward, he served that organization in every office except National Commander and National Vice-commander; and

WHEREAS, he was a distinguished member of the Elks, the Masons, and the Knights of Pythias as well; and

WHEREAS, Judge LaFon was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Judge LaFon enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Nell LaFon, a former Executive Assistant to *Tennessean* publisher Silliman Evans; she preceded him in death on October 4, 2007; and

WHEREAS, although the couple never had children of their own, they did have many nieces and nephews, all of whom will sorely miss their beloved uncle; and

WHEREAS, Pauline LaFon Gore, sister of Judge LaFon and wife of Senator Al Gore, Sr., attended Vanderbilt Law School like her brother; she was the tenth woman to receive a law degree from that institution. Mrs. Gore also preceded Judge LaFon in death, passing away on December 15, 2004; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Whit LaFon leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional jurist, public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Judge Whit LaFon, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Judge LaFon.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.